

THE "MOOD THEORY": A STUDY OF PUBLIC OPINION AND FOREIGN POLICY*

WILLIAM R. CASPARY
Washington University, St. Louis

This paper is concerned with assessing the stability of the American public's attention to foreign affairs, and the relationship of this to public support of international programs and commitments. In particular, the paper presents an empirical investigation of the evidence for the "mood theory" proposed by Gabriel Almond as one element of his classic study, *The American People and Foreign Policy*.

The mood theory contends, first of all, that attention to or interest in foreign policy is generally low and subject to major fluctuations in times of crisis.

The characteristic response to questions of foreign policy is one of indifference. A foreign policy crisis, short of the immediate threat of war may transform indifference to vague apprehension, to fatalism, to anger; but the reaction is still a mood.¹

* This research is a segment of a larger project on public reaction to international events (see also, William R. Caspary, "United States Public Opinion During the Onset of the Cold War," *Peace Research Society (International), Papers*, IX (1968), 25-46; and "Dimensions of Attitudes on International Conflict," *Peace Research Society (International), Papers* XIII (1970, forthcoming). This research has been partially supported by grants from Northwestern University and Washington University. Survey data of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), and the American Institute of Public Opinion (AIPO), was obtained from the Roper Public Opinion Research Center. Supplementary survey data was provided by the library of NORC. The author gratefully acknowledges the help he received from these sources and from individuals associated with these institutions.

It may interest the reader that, during the more than four years that have elapsed since this article was first written in substantially the present form, my own interests have shifted considerably. If one is passionately concerned as I am with the injustice of the U.S. globalist—or, if you will, imperialist—foreign policy, research of the sort presented here seems a rather sterile exercise: My current work is devoted to a study of the economic, ideological, and bureaucratic sources of American interventionism in the undeveloped world.

¹ Gabriel A. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1960), p. 53.

On the basis of this premise about attention, Almond predicts that the public will not provide stable support for international commitments undertaken by the U.S. Government.

Because of the superficial character of American attitudes toward world politics . . . a temporary Russian tactical withdrawal may produce strong tendencies toward demobilization and the reassertion of the primacy of private and domestic values.²

The acceptance of this view by scholars is evidenced by its presentation in important textbooks and treatises.³ As far as I have been able to determine it has not been challenged.

The empirical investigation in this paper considers evidence on both of these variables—attention=interest, and support for foreign policy commitments.

It should be remembered that Almond warned against over-reaction to the Soviet threat as well as the tendency to demobilize. Discussion in this paper of popular support for American foreign policy should not be taken as indicating the author's support for the "globalism," the "Pax Americana" strategy that characterizes that policy today.

I. STABILITY OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS INVOLVEMENT

In marked contrast to the mood theory is a result we have obtained from national public opinion poll data gathered by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC). This result is the remarkable stability of strong popular support for an active U.S. role in world affairs. Trend data on the item: "Do you think it will be best for the future of the country if we take an active part in world affairs, or if we stay out of world affairs?" are shown in Figure 1. The

² *Op. cit.*, p. 55. See also pp. 60, 80, 99, 106.

³ See for example, James N. Rosenau, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy* (New York: Random House, 1961), pp. 35-37; Martin C. Needler, *Understanding Foreign Policy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1966), p. 23; Edgar S. Furniss, Jr., and Richard C. Snyder, *An Introduction to American Foreign Policy* (New York: Rinehart, 1955), p. 198; Bernard C. Cohen, *The Political Process and Foreign Policy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 55.

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average percent 71%. The standard error of the average is 1.5%. The sampling error is 3.5% over a 95% confidence interval. The average is based on 47 interviews through the course of the Korean war to an average of 1.5% per wave.

Some of the data Almond wrote. The active part in world affairs is that it is an active part in world affairs which evokes a strong amount of concern for world affairs. Never answers to the question to his response to the question involving tests of this. Across 47 different gamma is .50.

In the light of the stable international policies, it is for individual Figure 2). See was followed

vs. "fear" that public is always about to withdraw to "isolationism"

"indicators of withdrawal" (here, "need" for crisis)

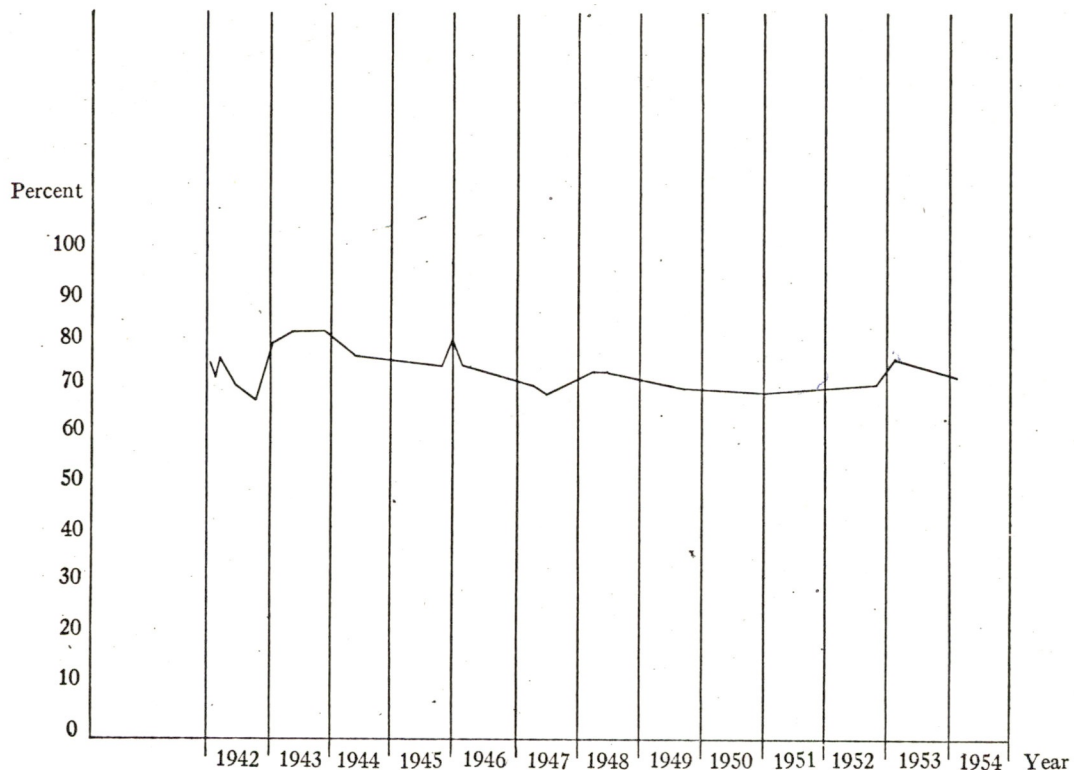


FIG. 1. Percent supporting an active part in world affairs for the U.S., over time.

average percentage favoring an active part is 71%. The standard deviation of the points from the average is only 1.8%, less than the expected sampling error. This remarkable stability occurred over a time of violent change in world affairs from war to peace and demobilization, through the onset of the cold war and the shock of the Korean struggle. The popular commitment to an active U.S. role, however, did not appear to waver.

Some of these data were available when Almond wrote. His evaluation of this item on an active part in world affairs, however, stressed that it is an "emotionally loaded question" which evokes responses which misrepresents the amount of concern Americans have for foreign affairs. Nevertheless, I find that the respondent's answers to this question is an excellent predictor to his response on a wide range of policy questions involving international commitments. The tests of this relationship are shown in Table 1. Across 47 different tests, the average value of gamma is .50.

In the light of the strong association between the stable internationalism indicator and specific policies, it is not surprising to find that support for individual policies is also fairly stable (see Figure 2). Support for military aid to Europe was followed in NORC polls over an eight

year period. The support which fluctuated around 50% of the sample during the late forties gave way to slightly higher, but equally stable support after the Korean war. Though data were collected for shorter periods, the results for Marshall plan aid, military aid to Europe, support for NATO, and willingness to intervene militarily against a Communist attack also show impressive stability.

To a certain extent, Almond's interpretation allows for these findings. He formulates the concept of "permissive mood" to characterize the passive acceptance by the public of internationalist policies formulated and urged by its official leaders.⁴ He sees this permissive mood as a particular characteristic of the Cold War situation in which the threat of the Soviet Union at least temporarily forces Americans to accept international commitments. Almond repeatedly warns, however, that this is a mood response and not an intellectually structured one. The mood may change if the international environment does. "The undertow of withdrawal is still powerful."⁵

The question is whether Almond would have anticipated the amount of stability that our data indicate. Suppose we give a more precise

⁴ Almond, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

use about attention, public will not provide national commitments government.

character of American as . . . a temporary may produce strong upon and the reassessment private and domestic

by scholars is evident important texts I have been able challenged. in this paper connect these variables—attitude for foreign policy

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SUPPORT FOR MENT

mood theory is a national public by the National (NORC). This record of strong popular in world affairs. you think it will country if we take or if we stay out in Figure 1. The

80, 80, 99, 106. Rosenau, *Public New York: Random C. Needler, Un- New York: Holt, p. 23; Edgar S. der, An Introduc- cy (New York: C. Cohen, The Policy (Princeton, 1957), p. 55.*

TABLE 1. ASSOCIATION BETWEEN SUPPORT FOR AN ACTIVE U.S. ROLE IN WORLD AFFAIRS, AND SPECIFIC INTERNATIONAL POLICY COMMITMENTS

Survey Number	Policy	Gamma
124	Korea worth fighting	.58
	Talks fail: pull out, hold line, attack	-.48
	Defend other countries if Communists attack	-.61
127	Too many sacrifices for defense	-.39
137	Aid, as cut, is too much, right, not enough	-.35
	Do more to help Indochina	.48
105	U.S. was right to send troops to Korea	.64
	If Communists attack other countries, help defend	.74
	Continue Marshall aid	.50
	Approve NATO agreement	.66
	Send military supplies to Europe now	.50
	Send troops to Europe now	.39
	Too many sacrifices for defense	-.39
	Send military supplies to Asian countries threatened by Communists	.28
	U.S. has gone too far with the problems of the world	-.76
94	Send military supplies to Europe now	.50
	Continue Marshall Aid	.53
	Marshall Aid is too much	-.38
	As cut by Truman, Marshall Aid is too much	-.44
	Stop Communists from spreading in Asia	.53
	Important for U.S. to cooperate with Arab countries	.35
	Important for U.S. to cooperate with France	.47
	Important for U.S. to cooperate with Greece	.47
	Important for U.S. to cooperate with Israel	.33
	Important for U.S. to cooperate with India	.42
	Important for U.S. to obtain Middle East oil	.42
	Important for U.S. to stop spread of Communism in the world	.48

TABLE 1. (continued)

Survey Number	Policy	Gamma
091	Continue Marshall aid	.58
	Marshall aid too much	.51
	Aid really helps U.S.	.64
	Aid has been stopping Communism	.42
	Countries would go Communist without aid	.26
	Aid is getting Europe on its feet	.22
	They could get along without aid	-.58
	Use U.S. troops to stop Communist attack in Europe	.57
	Use U.S. troops to stop Communist attack in South America	.37
	Use U.S. troops to stop Communist attack in India	.49
	Send military supplies to Europe	.34
	Stop Communism in Asia	.58
	Real concern for England's finances	.62
078	Satisfied with Marshall Plan	.46
	Continue Marshall Plan next year	.73
	Spending too much on Marshall Plan	-.54
	Send military supplies to Europe now	.44
	Keep occupation troops in Germany	.74
	Keep occupation troops in Japan	.68
	Keep occupation troops in Korea	.65

formulation of Almond's analysis as follows: the percentage of people supporting international commitments will vary directly with the percentage perceiving a given level of threat from the Soviet Union. To test this, we will use as an indicator of perceived threat, the expectation of war. This indicator has several things to recommend it. It correlates strongly with various other items on expectations of Russian behavior, and trend data is available which is sensitive to changes in Soviet behavior and pronouncements.

Comparison between the trends in expectation of war and in support for an active U.S. role is shown in Figure 3. As we have already seen, support for an active role scarcely fluctuates. Expectation of war, on the other hand, shows fluctuations up to 50%. Clearly a direct ratio between the two variables does not hold.

A weaker formulation that is also consistent with Almond's analysis is that support for an active role should remain steady at some high level as long as perceived threat is above some threshold value. In this formulation, support for an active part would decline sharply if perceived threat fell below the threshold. From 1947 through 1953, the period covered by our data,

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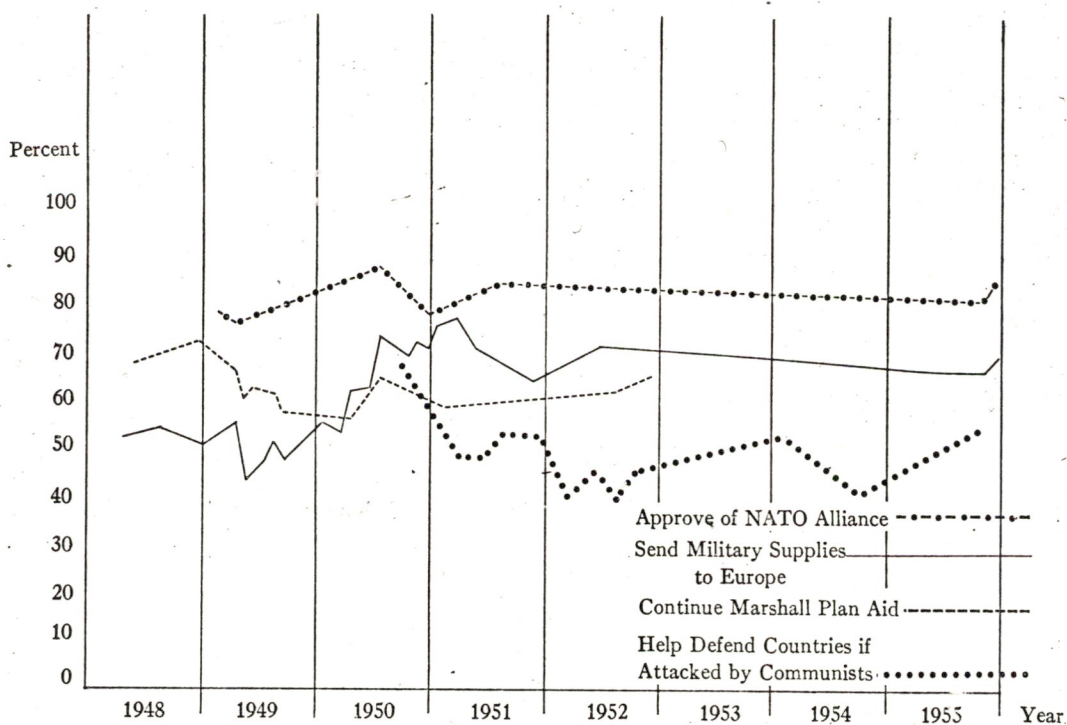


FIG. 2. Percent supporting internationalist policies, over time.

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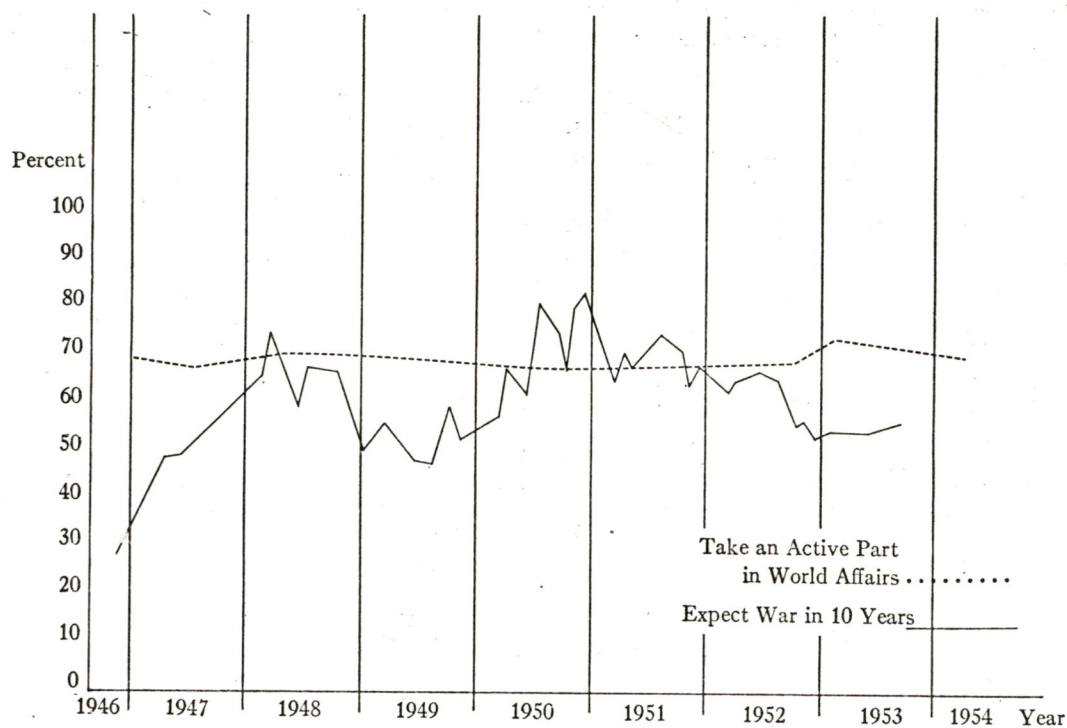


FIG. 3. Internationalism and perceived threat, over time.

more than 47% of the population expected war within ten years. But in November 1946, when NORC first asked about expectation of war, only 28% thought it likely within ten years. If the question had been asked in the immediate post-war lull, the figure would probably have been even lower. Nonetheless, support for an active part remained steady around 70% at these times.

In any event, the threshold formulation has weaknesses on theoretical grounds. The aggregate results with which we are dealing come from summing over individuals who are likely to exhibit different thresholds and to perceive different amounts of threat at a given time. A slight easing in Soviet pressures would probably mean that all individuals would perceive slightly less threat. If Almond is correct that the commitment is only a response to threat, some individuals would cross their personal thresholds and no longer feel compelled to support an active U.S. role.

II. MENTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS AS AN INDICATOR OF "ATTENTION" OR "INTEREST"

Almond's pessimistic expectation of unstable commitments is based on his belief that the characteristic response of Americans to foreign policy issues is indifference. His data lead him to see "(1) the extreme dependence of public interest in foreign affairs on dramatic and overtly threatening events; (2) the extraordinary pull of domestic and private affairs even in periods of international crisis."⁶ This conclusion is based upon trend data on one questionnaire item.

One of the most interesting accumulations of evidence on this general question of the focus of public attention is a series of Gallup polls which has been conducted since 1935. On more than twenty occasions during the fifteen year period the American Institute of Public Opinion has asked a sample of the public: "What do you regard as the most important problem before the American people today? . . . The form of this question has the advantage of registering spontaneous responses. In the multiple choice or 'yes-no' type of question one can never be sure that the respondent draws a clear distinction between what really is on his mind and what he thinks ought to be on his mind. The undirected response is a more reliable indication of the real degree and extent of spontaneous interest in foreign policy problems."

This question was coded for whether the respondent mentioned an international problem or a domestic one. The percentage of the sample

mentioning international problems over the years, as reported by Almond, is shown in figure 4.⁸ If this item is indeed an indicator of attention to or interest in foreign affairs, then it is plain that there have been dramatic fluctuations in interest and/or attention. It is also clear, as Almond elaborates in his book, that the peaks of the trend line come at times of international crisis such as the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia and the Italian elections of 1948. Similarly the troughs of the curve show preoccupation with domestic concerns such as economic reconversion in the wake of World War II.

But is the mention of an international problem really an indicator of interest or attention? It would seem on the face of it that this is so, but surprisingly enough this response shows rather weak association with the respondent's judgment of how interested he is in China (gamma = .157), the United Nations (gamma = .141), and England's financial crisis (gamma = .146). It may be that, as Almond says, the open-ended question is a more trustworthy indicator since it does not structure the replies or favor a particular alternative. On the other hand, one would expect a somewhat stronger association between the two.

To test this further, let us look at another indicator of attention—whether the respondent says he has heard or read of a particular foreign policy issue or international event. This item was frequently used and we have a total of 12 tests of association between it and mention of an international problem. These are shown in Table 2. Although the association is quite weak (gamma less than .13) for five of these, the rest show stronger association. In all but one of these cases it turns out that the attention items cut the population into a large group aware of some important event and a small group that is unaware. It appears that only the people at the bottom of the attention scale differ significantly from the rest in their tendency to mention international problems. I shall discuss the significance of this finding in Section III.

The question about hearing or reading of an event, like the one about interest, may tempt the respondent to give a false report in order to gain the interviewer's approval. The respondent cannot, however, falsify replies to requests for factual information. Five such questions have appeared on surveys along with the item on the most important problem facing the country. The results of tests of association between these two variables are shown in Table 3. Three of the tests show very weak association (gamma less than .09). Of the other two, one uses an indic-

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

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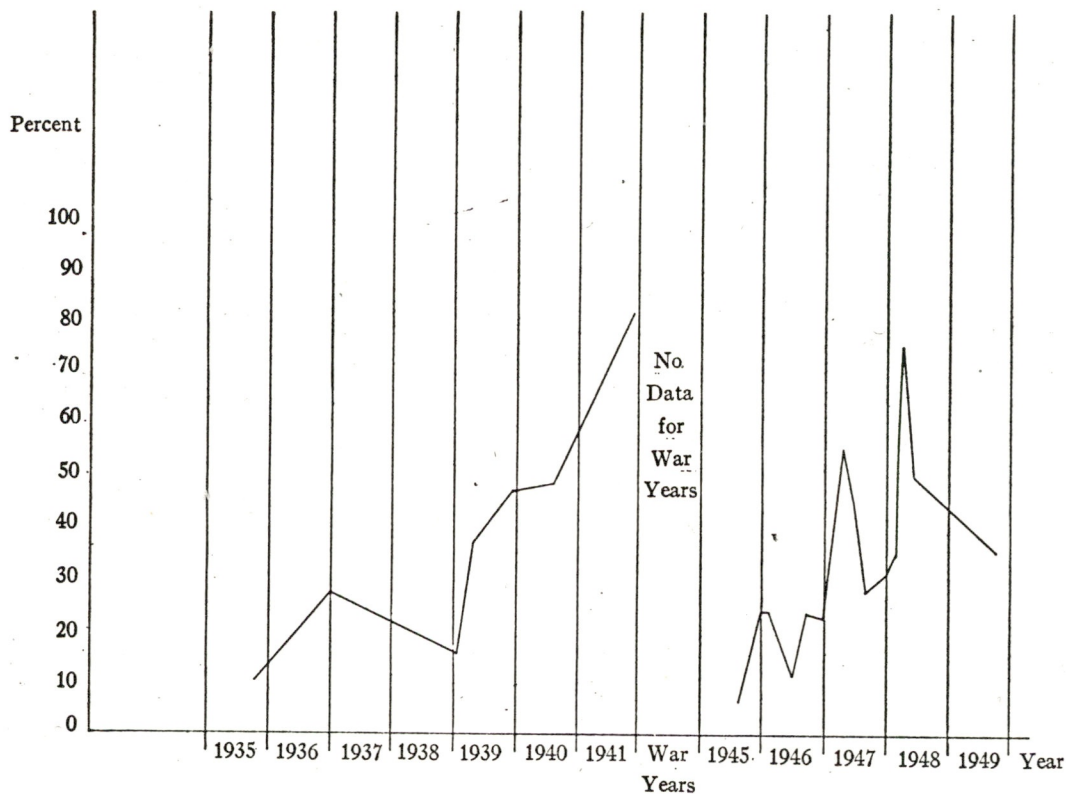


FIG. 4. Percent mentioning international problems as most important, over time.

ator that discriminates a small group at the bottom of the attention scale. Finally, some additional miscellaneous indicators of attention were used. The results are shown in Table 3. All the associations were weak (gamma less than .14).

The result of these tests (with two minor exceptions) appears to be that for all but the very least attentive respondents an increase in mention of international problems is not likely to be associated with an increase in attentiveness. Though there might have been reason to doubt this negative result on the basis of any one of these indicators, the consistent findings across all of them strengthen that interpretation.

As a further check on the validity of the various attention indicators we constructed a matrix of intercorrelations among them as shown in Table 4. Some of the cells of the matrix are fuller than others because on many surveys not all of the various kinds of indices occurred together. We see in this matrix that all but three of the tests of association show gamma greater than .30 and that most of them are quite strong (gamma greater than .50). This suggests that there is a single dimension of attention which is tapped more or less by all of these items. Structured and unstructured questions, reports of interest and factual knowledge, and actual behavior

such as membership in organizations where foreign affairs are discussed all seem to be loaded on this dimension. Does trend data exist on these other attention indicators that compares in frequency with the most-important-problem data. The best that is available is four occurrences of the item, "How much interest do you take in the United Nations Organization?" A comparison between this item and the mention of international problems as most important is shown in Figure 5. It is fortunate that the National Opinion Research Center Poll which showed no change in interest in the U.N. at the end of 1958 was taken within a few days of the Gallup poll which registered a striking decline of mention of international problems. This indicates stability of attention to international affairs at a time when domestic events appear to have been exerting a great pull on people's attention. Thus we have not only cast doubt on the evidence from which Almond inferred instability, we have found evidence to the contrary.

III. RATE OF MENTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS BY THE MOST ATTENTIVE RESPONDENTS

We have seen that the mention of international problems does not seem to be associated

TABLE 2. ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MENTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS, AND AWARENESS OF ISSUES

Survey Number and Date	Heard or Read About	Gamma	% who did not hear or read
078, June 29, 1948	Reorganization of Berlin, (and have opinion)	.22	60
084, January 26, 1949	Tito-Stalin split	.08	53
	Indonesia dispute	.11	48
	Truman's Inaugural Speech	.04	40
510, January 9, 1953	H-bomb	.12	20
	Universal Military Training	.00	40
596, March 4, 1958	Foreign Aid Bill	.07	43
628, May 24, 1960	U-2 Incident	.26	6
631, July 14, 1960	U.S.—Cuba Relations	.26	17
648, July 25, 1961	Berlin Dispute	.27	13
663, September 18, 1962	Our Troubles with Cuba	.65	6
664, October 17, 1962	The Peace Corps	.24	28
	Berlin Dispute	.39	11

with this attention dimension, except to the extent that those very low on attention mention international problems somewhat less. Almond, on the contrary, singles out the *most* attentive group as the one that should be different! He expects that stable attention will be characteristic of only those individuals whose attitudes show "intellectual structure" and factual content.⁹ To meet this criterion, an individual must "have explicit evaluations of the relative costs and efficiency of alternative means of maximizing the value position of [his] country."¹⁰

Have we actually shown that this top attention group is not more likely to mention international problems? That would be demonstrated only if the attention tests we have used are finely enough calibrated to discriminate between this group and the others. Almond does not give a clear operational procedure for isolating this "attentive public," but Rosenau estimates on the basis of circulation figures for quality media that the attentive public is "no larger than ten percent of the population and possibly much smaller."¹¹ Roper gives a similar estimate.¹²

A few of the attention indicators we have used

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Rosenau, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

¹² Quoted by Rosenau, *ibid.*

TABLE 3. ASSOCIATION BETWEEN MENTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS, AND FACTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND OTHER INDICATORS OF ATTENTIVENESS

Survey Number and Date	Indicator or Attentiveness	Gamma	% don't know or wrong answer
066, April 1947	Know that the U.S. has joined an organization for world peace	.26	36
084, January 26, 1949	Know who is Secretary of State	.03	40
078, June 29, 1948	Know if fighting still going on in Palestine	.08	51
	Know if some Jewish groups are opposed to the Jewish government in Palestine	.09	66
648, July 25, 1961	Know what a geiger counter is	.25	29
066, April 1947	Belong to organization in which foreign affairs are discussed	.09	
078, June 29, 1948	Report some impression of the Greek government (favorable or unfavorable)	-.05	
	Report some impression of the Chinese government (favorable or unfavorable)	-.11	
084, January 26, 1949	Believe that a citizen can influence his government by writing letters, or taking miscellaneous other actions; or don't know, or believe citizens can't or shouldn't have influence	.13	

discriminate a top group on the order of ten percent of the population or less, but show weak association with mention of international problems. To check this result, scales were constructed by taking the sum of the scores on two or three separate items. In no case is the top attention group sharply distinguishable from the neighboring ones in frequency of mention of international problems.

If the attentive public indeed has a stronger and more stable tendency to mention international events this difference should show up most at times when the overall percentage of people mentioning international events is low. At times of relative international calm, or at times when domestic events preempt attention, only the attentive public would continue to have its eye focused on international problems and mention them to the interviewer. The lowest level reached in mention of international problems was 28% (AIPO Survey No. 596, March 1958).¹³ The degree of association between men-

¹³ A slightly different interpretation of these

Heard or read of event, person, program, etc.

Interested in event, issue, person, etc.

Factual knowledge of event, etc.

Want U.S. an active role in world affairs

Consider well informed about event, person, etc.

TABLE 4. ASSOCIATION (GAMMA) AMONG INDICATORS OF ATTENTION TO
OR INTEREST IN WORLD AFFAIRS

	Heard or read	Interest	Factual knowledge	Active part	Well informed	Belong to organization
Heard or read of event, person, program, etc.	098: .64 084: .81 664: .79					
		091: .73 .56 .58				
		088: .65 .64 .57 054: .60 .40 .65				
Interested in event, issue, person, etc.	088: .70 .44 .51 077: .34 .37 .12 .21	077: .75 .58 .69 .48 .59 .70				
		082: .72 .67 .70 .75 .74 .83				
		083: .16 .51 .77				
		648: .69				
Factual knowledge of event, person, etc.	084: .67 .70	054: .31 .53 .31				
Want U.S. to take an active part in world affairs	094: .54 078: .44	091: .48 .43 .37	127: .57			
Consider self well informed about event, person, etc.		688: .51 .34 .35 .18 .53				

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TABLE 4. (continued)

	Heard or read	Interest	Factual knowledge	Active part	Well informed	Belong to organization
			066: .36			
Belong to organization			079: .78			
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affairs are			.73			Number in italic
discussed			.77			is identification
			.74			number of survey
			.81			

tion of international problems and one indicator of attention (heard or read of foreign aid bill) was still quite low (gamma = .07, see Table 2). For all other surveys on which attention measures were available the percent mentioning international problems was 37% or over, and for all but three it was greater than 50%.

marginals from AIPO Survey No. 596, item 2, has appeared in an article by Deutsch and Merritt. See appendix for details.

IV. INTERPRETATION OF THE WEAKNESS OF MENTION OF INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS AS AN INDICATOR OF ATTENTION

It would appear, then, that a strong case has been made against using the mention of international problems as most important as an indicator of attention. The reader may wonder why such a major effort was mounted in this paper on behalf of the negative result of contesting the validity of a single indicator. There are several reasons: (a) the indicator has been widely used:

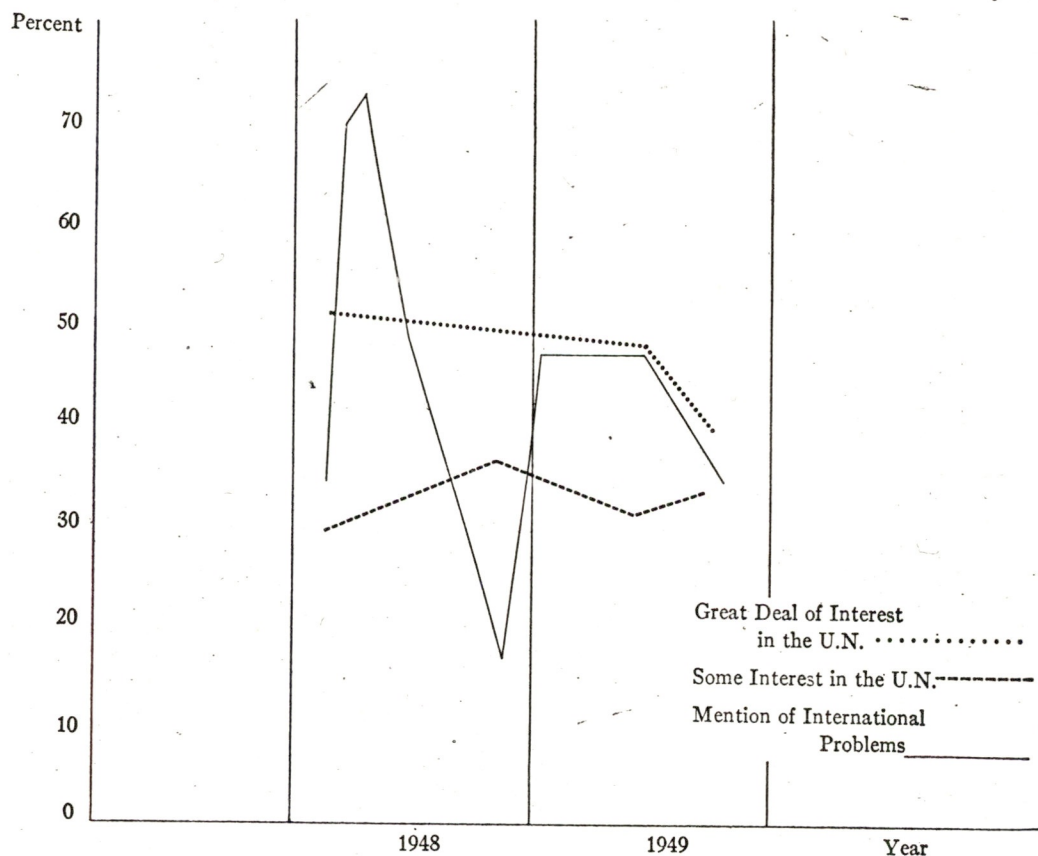


Fig. 5. Interest in the U.N. and mention of international problems, over time.

TABLE 5. VARIATION IN ATTENTION WITH INTERNATIONALISM
WITHIN MENTION-INTERNATIONAL-PROBLEMS-GROUP

Measure of Attention	Mention international problems			Mention domestic problem		
	Military aid to Greece			Military aid to Greece		
	Approve	Disapprove	Total	Approve	Disapprove	Total
Acheson named	47%	34%	40%	41%	39%	40%
Aware of change	22	27	25	23	24	23
Not aware of or don't know	31	39	35	36	37	37
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Heard or read of Tito-Stalin dispute	59	50	54	49	38	44
Didn't hear or read	41	50	46	51	62	56
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Heard or read of Indonesia conflict	64	56	59	54	43	49
Didn't hear or read	36	44	41	36	57	51
	100	100	100	100	100	100
	n = 246	322	567			
	Send Military Supplies to Europe now			Send Military Supplies to Europe now		
	Approve	Disapprove	Total	Approve	Disapprove	Total
Acheson named	47	31	40	40	35	38
Aware of change	23	27	25	24	22	23
Not aware of change	30	42	35	36	43	39
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Heard or read of Tito-Stalin dispute	61	41	53	43	49	46
Didn't hear or read	39	59	47	57	51	54
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Heard or read of Indonesia conflict	62	51	57	50	52	51
Didn't hear or read	38	49	43	50	48	49
	100	100	100	100	100	100

in addition to Almond's work and the many citations of it, Smith, and Deutsch and Merritt have made important empirical studies which rely upon this indicator;¹⁴ (b) a major proposi-

tion about the instability of American foreign policy attitudes based on this indicator may now

¹⁴ Paul A. Smith, "Opinions, Publics, and World Affairs in the United States," *Western Political Quarterly*, 14 (1961), 698-714; Karl W. Deutsch

and Richard L. Merritt, "Effects of Events on National and International Images," in Herbert C. Kelman (ed.), *International Behavior* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965).

be called into question; (c) we may be at a stage in the development of this area of inquiry at which it is appropriate to turn from sweeping and imaginative theory construction to the more mundane task of rigorous testing of individual indicators and propositions; (d) we have striven by using a variety of indicators and techniques to make the most of a data pool not designed to produce answers to this particular question. What would be desired, of course, would be an elite sample as well as a general population sample, and a battery of interest and attention measures. Given such data we conceivably could still find that the "most-important-problem" indicator proved to discriminate between the general public and a much smaller elite group on the order of less than 1% of the population. Even for such a elite, however, there are reasons to suspect that this measure will not be a valid measure of attentiveness.

(a) This indicator is a measure of *primacy* of attention, not of strength of attention. An individual who is inattentive to both international and domestic problems might be slightly less inattentive to international ones and mention one of these as most important. Conversely an individual strongly interested in politics may be slightly more interested in domestic than international issues and mention a domestic one to the interviewer.

(b) The use of the word "today" (or "now" in some variants) may do a great deal of structure the responses by focusing upon immediate problems and crises rather than broad, long term issues. The crisis dominated aspect of public responses which Almond found¹⁵ may be purely an artifact of this wording. Though this interpretation cannot be tested with available data, it is not hard to see how it would be tested in the future. One could simply substitute the phrase, "over the next ten years" for "today."

(c) Mention of international problems as most important is also uncorrelated with indicators of isolationism. Thus there must be substantial numbers of people whose responses were

¹⁵ Almond, *op. cit.*, p. 72 (see quote, above, p. 5, footnote 6).

coded as international who are of isolationist persuasion. When they mention international problems it may be with the thought of how best to withdraw from them. If the isolationists tend to be less attentive than the rest of the population, then their presence would lower the attention score for the group that mentions international problems. Evidence that this does happen is shown in Table 5. The variation within the four major cells of the table is greater than the variation between them.

V. CONCLUSION

The Mood Theory was summarized at the start of this paper as having a premise—generally low and unstable attention to foreign affairs—and a conclusion—unstable support for foreign policy commitments. Empirical evidence has been presented in these pages to show that both the premise and the conclusion are false.

On the basis of these findings I suggest the following alternative interpretation: that American Public Opinion is characterized by a *strong and stable* "permissive mood" toward international involvements. Although I have not included any data analysis on current opinion it is tempting to speculate that the support by the long-suffering American public of 10 years of fighting—and 4 years of heavy combat—in Vietnam is an indication of the existence of a permissive mood. It also indicates that such a mood provides a blank check for foreign policy adventures, not just a responsible support for international organization, genuine foreign assistance, and basic defense measures. Almond by no means ignored this line of thought—indeed the notion of permissive mood is his own and he stressed its dangers. There is no indication, however, that he anticipated the strength or stability of commitment to American foreign policy that our data suggests. He appears to have been heavily influenced (as have a number of other commentators) by evidence which we have demonstrated on closer examination to be of dubious validity. Finally it should be noted that we have dealt here with only one element of the rich array of theory and findings in Almond's classic work.

"11 Peace; prevent war; fear
12 Foreign affairs
general
13 Relations with
14 Threat of Russia
communism

15 World Economy
16 Foreign aid

17 Problems of
18 Arms race
19 Rockets, missiles

21 Problems of
29 Miscellaneous

31 National Security
defense; arms

"32 Clean Government
33 Balancing budget
34 Taxes (etc.)
problems

^a obtained from
^b tabulated from
^c "unemployment
American Institute
^d Karl W. Deutsch
ed., *International
Merritt article
done in March*

APPENDIX

INTERPRETATION OF RESPONSES ON "MOST IMPORTANT PROBLEM,"
AIPO SURVEY NO. 596, MARCH 1958

AIPO Code ^a	% responding ^b	Gallup Press ^c Release	Deutsch and ^d Merritt	This Paper	
"11 Peace; prevention of war; keeping out of war; fear of war, etc.	8%	"keeping the peace 17%	"foreign policy interest 17%	international problems 28%	
12 Foreign affairs; international problems, general	4%				
13 Relations with Russia (general)	2%				
14 Threat of Russia, threat of Communism; communism	3%				
15 World Economic problems	0%	"national defense 3%			
16 Foreign aid, general	1%				
17 Problems of Space (general)	0%				
18 Arms race—atomic bombs, missiles	3%				
19 Rockets, missiles—space problems	4%				
21 Problems of the Atomic age (general)	1%				
29 Miscellaneous International Problems					
31 National Security; preparedness, national defense; defense program"	3%				
Total	29%				
"32 Clean Government; honest leaders, etc.	63%			domestic problems 63%	
33 Balancing the budget					
34 Taxes (etc., 35-52; other domestic problems)"					

^a obtained from Roper Public Opinion Research Center^b tabulated from survey cards^c "unemployment" Named No. 1 Worry for First Time Since '37," *Public Opinion News Service*, for release March 23, 1958, American Institute of Public Opinion^d Karl W. Deutsch and Richard L. Merritt, "Effects of Events on National and International Images," in Herbert G. Kelman, ed., *International Behavior*, New York Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, p. 161 (note: an error in the text of the Deutsch and Merritt article states that the survey took place in May but their information clearly identifies it as number 596 which was done in March 1958.)